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Hello My name is Fred Thornley and I work for Hartford Public Schools in one of the Magnet Schools- Noah Webster MicroSociety MS. I have been teaching in Hartford for over 20 years at the Middle School level. My two boys have attended Noah Webster through 8th grade as I was a resident of Hartford for 11 years. I have seen our school, which was one of the best of all the magnet schools for years, fall farther and farther behind academically and even more sadly, culturally. By culturally, I mean our Magnet Theme and diverse make up of students. Our Literacy coaches, Literacy volunteers, Enrichment Coaches, Deans, Magnet Coach, and other support staff have all been eliminated over the past 5 years or so due to budget constraints. Due to these eliminations of staff, obvious negative consequences have occurred to our students in all areas.

In addition, our school day has been dramatically shifted due to transportation changes (sharing busses at staggered start and end times) again due to budget reasons. This shift has lengthened the school day to 3:50/4:00. Bus pick up for some students who now have a lengthy bus ride home, could be as late as 5:00 PM DAILY.

I can not implore enough to the Educational Committee, to revisit discussions about funding to magnet schools and all municipal schools that can not simply make increases through their tax base. Raised Bill 948 can address the inequities in funding and equality to our schools. Where our school was once a fairly diverse Magnet School, today it has lost much of what made it special. This is due predominantly to the staffing changes mentioned above and the decreased funding in general of Magnet Schools from the State level.

All I can add as a dedicated, decorated teacher in Hartford is that making decisions on funding for all our societal issues is not an easy one. Cuts and sacrifices need to be made often, but there comes a time when you look and see that so much has been taken away from schools that students suffer no matter how hard those dedicated teachers and staff, like myself, work. Funding schools and most importantly city schools should be of the utmost priority in our state.

Please vote and push to move Raised Bill 948 out of committee and into the realm where real change can occur.

Thank you